



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL RETARDATION



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## Individual and Family Fact Sheet – ABUSE AND NEGLECT

### *The right to be free from abuse or neglect . . .*

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This fact sheet contains some important things you should know if you ever suspect that your family member has been intentionally hurt by someone who is taking care of him or her. Even if you do not feel that this applies to you or your situation, and hopefully it never will, you should read this fact sheet carefully so you will know what to do if you are ever faced with this in the future.

#### **What Is Abuse?**

Abuse means the willful infliction by a caregiver, of physical pain or injury or the willful deprivation of services necessary to the physical and mental health and safety of an individual. The term also includes the use of offensive language or act, to provoke or upset an individual or subject him or her to humiliation or ridicule. Willful means the intentional acts or omissions or the reckless disregard for the safety and consequences of one's acts or omissions. If you are unsure if something is abuse, report it and let an investigator decide if it is. If you think someone is being hurt or made afraid in any way, you should report it.

*Do not let anyone discourage you from reporting suspected abuse or neglect. It is your right to make the report yourself.*

#### **What is Neglect?**

Neglect means the failure by a caregiver through action or inaction to provide an individual with the services necessary to maintain his or her physical and mental health and safety or a situation in which a person with mental retardation is living alone and unable to provide for him or herself such services. If you are unsure if something is neglect, report it and let an investigator decide if it is. If you think someone is not being properly cared for or supervised, you should report it.



#### **What Should I Do If I Suspect Abuse Or Neglect?**

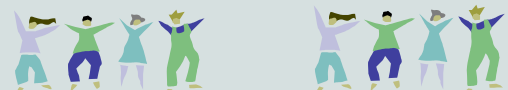
**First, make sure the person being supported is safe.** In Connecticut, the law requires any caregiver who has witnessed, been told about, or suspects abuse or neglect to report it to the proper authority.

A report must be made to one of the protective service agencies (listed below), depending on the age of the alleged victim:

- **Children aged 17 or under:**  
The Department of Children and Families (DCF)  
1-800-842-2288
- **Adults aged 18 to 59:**  
The Office of Protection and Advocacy (P&A)  
1-800-842-7303 or TDD (860) 566-2102
- **Adults aged 60 years or over:**  
The Department of Social Services (DSS)

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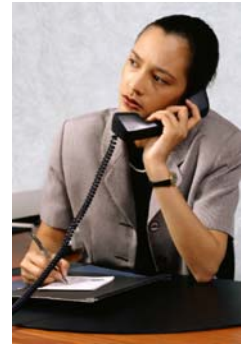
Do I Need To Report Suspected Abuse Or Neglect To DMR?  
What Happens When I Report Abuse Or Neglect?  
What If My Family Member Needs Medical Attention?  
Who Conducts The Investigation?  
What Happens During The Investigation?  
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## Do I Need To Report Suspected Abuse Or Neglect To DMR?

Yes, you also need to report suspected abuse or neglect to your case manager or broker who will help you report it to the appropriate people in the region.

If the suspected abuse involves physical or sexual assault or any other criminal act, the police will be notified by the agency you report it to. If you want to be sure that a report was made to the local police, call them directly. *You have the right to press charges* against the suspected person (also known as the alleged perpetrator) in criminal cases.



### What Happens When I Report Abuse Or Neglect?

*The first concern is to be sure the person is safe.* When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff person, the employee is placed off duty by the employer and an investigation begins.



This means the staff suspected of abuse or neglect cannot work with the person until the investigation is completed. As an employer, you must follow the laws that protect the worker. At the same time, protecting the safety and rights of the victim. DMR staff will help you if you are ever faced with this situation. If the person suspected of abuse or neglect is not a staff person, your case manager or broker will help you plan how to keep the victim safe until the investigation is completed.

### What If My Family Member Needs Medical Attention?

If you discover a suspicious injury, it is wise to have that injury evaluated by medical professionals who may be able to determine the possible cause. You may also want to take photos of any bruises, cuts, or other injuries as evidence that could help with the investigation. If you wish to take your family member to a doctor for additional evaluation and follow-up care, do not hesitate to do so.

### Who Conducts The Investigation?

Investigations are done by one of the protective service agencies, DMR or your private provider agency, depending on the age of the person and where they live or receive services. If you have information or evidence that would help in the investigation, it is important for you to share it with the investigator as soon as possible.

### What Happens During The Investigation?

When an investigator is assigned, he or she will conduct a thorough investigation to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident. Investigators will also interview and take written statements from the person who reported the abuse, the alleged victim, any potential witnesses and the alleged perpetrator, (the person suspected of committing the abuse or neglect). The investigator reviews the evidence gathered, determines whether or not the abuse or neglect happened (also referred to as substantiation of abuse or neglect), and prepares a report of findings.

### What Happens When The Investigation Is Complete?

You should receive information about the findings of the investigation when it is completed, and whether or not abuse or neglect was substantiated.

If the investigation finds there was no abuse or neglect (that is, allegation **is not** substantiated), then the employee can return to work. If there was abuse or neglect (the allegation **is** substantiated), the employee will face disciplinary action. In some cases involving criminal acts, the investigation report may be referred to the police for further investigation, which may result in criminal charges.

**If you have any questions about abuse or neglect, call your case manager or support broker for help.**